

## Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-07 ISO-00 SS-07 NSC-06 AID-01 /025 W  
-----310923Z 042314 /12

P R 310721Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1136  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 8884

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: OREP (SOLARZ, SETPHEN)  
SUBJECT: CODEL SOLARZ

### 1. SUMMARY:

CODEL SOLARZ MET WITH CROSS SECTION OF OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE SYRIANS WHO EXPRESSED TO HIM VIEWS RANGING FROM MODERATION TO INFLEXIBILITY. HIS MEETINGS WITH JEWISH COMMUNITY MEMBERS CONFIRMED COMMUNITY'S PRIMARY CONCERN IS TO OBTAIN PERMISSION FOR UNWED JEWISH GIRLS TO DEPART SYRIA. END SUMMARY

2. CODEL SOLARZ SPENT DECEMBER 23-26 IN DAMASCUS SOUND-INGO OUT OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL SYRIANS, SOME RESIDENT DIPLOMATS AND EMBASSY STAFF ON LONG LIST OF PREPARED QUESTIONS INCLUDING WHAT WOULD SYRIA BE PREPARED OFFER IN TERMS NORMALIZING INTERCOURSE WITH ISRAEL IN EVENT ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT PREDICATED ON COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO 1967 BORDERS AND CREATION OF INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK AND GAZA. HIGHEST RANKING  
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SARG OFFICIAL TO RECEIVE CODEL WAS DEFMIN MUSTAFA TLASS. TLASS INFORMED CODEL THAT SYRIA DID NOT VIEW ESTABLISHMENT OF UNDOF DEMILITARIZED ZONE AS PRECEDENT FOR OVERALL SETTLEMENT, AND ASSERTED THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT ACCEPT DEMILITARIZATION OF GOLAN WITHIN TERMS OF INFAL SETTLEMENT. HE FLATLY REFUSED TO CONSIDER STATIONING OF ISRAELI TROOPS

IN OP'S OR IN ANY OTHER FORM ON GOLAN IN FINAL SETTLEMENT, NOTING THAT "GOLAN IS OUR LAND." WHEN CODEL OBSERVED THAT SADAT HAD AGREED TO CONCEPT OF DEMILITARIZATION, TLASS SHOT BACK THAT, "THERE MUST BE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR TWO POSITIONS."

3. TLASS STATED THAT IF NO POSITIVE STEPS TOOK PLACE IN NEXT YEAR OR TWO, "THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO WAR." HE SAID SYRIAN ARMY MORE EXPERIENCED SINCE 1973, AND IN ADDITION SYRIA HAS CONSTRUCTED "POLITICAL UNITY" WITH JORDAN AND EGYPT. HE ADMITTED THAT SYRIA COULD NOT GO IT ALONE AGAINST ISRAEL, BUT REMINDED CODEL THAT USSR HAD MOBILIZED FOUR DIVISIONS DURING 1973 WAR AND MUST BE PERMITTED PLAY ROLE IN SETTLEMENT PROCESS. WHEN ISSUE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS RAISED, TLASS ACCUSED U.S. OF ASSISTING ISRAELI NUCLEAR PROGRAMS AND POINTEDLY SUGGESTED THAT, "WE HAVE FRIENDS TO GIVE US NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EVENT ISRAELIS HAVE THEM." ASKED IF SYRIA READY TO SHIFT RESOURCES FROM MILITARY TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AFTER SETTLEMENT, TLASS CONFESSED SUCH SHIFT WOULD HURT HIS OWN MINISTRY, BUT HE DID NOT RULE THIS OUT.

4. CODEL ASKED TLASS TO DEFINE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, BUT TLASS TURNED ASIDE QUESTION ASSERTING DEFMIN PROVIDES MILITARY, NOT POLITICAL ADVICE, AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS MUST BE DECIDED BY PALESTINIANS. AT ANOTHER POINT, TLASS ASSERTED THAT SYRIA COULD NOT PRESSURE PALESTINIANS BECAUSE U.S. COULD NOT BE TRUSTED TO PRESSURE ISRAEL.

5. FONMIN KHADDAM, BEING STILL CONFINED TO HOME RECUPERATING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, ARRANGED FOR CODEL TO MEET WITH DEPFONMIN ABDULLAH AL-KHANI. LATTER STATED THAT TLASS' STATEMENT RE NON-ACCEPTABILITY OF GOLAN DEMILITARIZATION WAS SARG POLICY. SYRIA, HE ADDED, INSISTED ON FULL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM GOLAN. AS FOR EXCHANGES OF TRADE, TOURISM, ETC. BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAEL, KHANI STATED THIS WOULD BE DECIDED AFTER SETTLEMENT. KHANI ALSO REITERATED NECESSITY OF OBSERVING PALESTINIAN RIGHT TO RETURN OR RECEIVE COMPENSATION FOR PROPERTIES LOST. KHANI MADE PASSING REFERENCE TO 1947 PARTITION PLAN IN CONTEXT ANSWERING QUESTION RE LIKELY BORDERS OF INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. WEST BANK/GAZA STATE HE REFERRED TO MORE THAN ONCE AS "FIRST STAGE." KHANI CONCLUDED MEETING BY CRITICIZING CODEL FOR WAY HE HAD CONDUCTED 1975 HOUSE HEARINGS WHICH HAD "DISTORTED" PICTURE OF JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SYRIA.

6. CODEL MADE DEMARCHE TO KHANI THAT IT WOULD BE HUMANITARIAN GESTURE FOR SARG TO PERMIT 400

JEWISH GIRLS IN 20-30 AGE CATEGORY TO VISIT U.S. ON STUDENT VISAS GIVING AT LEAST SOME OF THEM CHANCE TO GET MARRIED. CODEL SUGGESTED IT COULD BE DONE WITHOUT PUBLICITY. CODEL STRESSED HE HOPED THAT "AS TIME PASSES" SYRIA WILL FIND SOME ARRANGEMENT TO RELIEVE THIS PROBLEM. KHANI REPLIED HE FULLY RECOGNIZED HUMANITARIAN ASPECT OF PROBLEM ALTHOUGH HE ASKED WHY JEWISH GIRLS COULD NOT RPT NOT MARRY MEN FROM OTHER FAITHS. CODEL OBSERVED THAT GIRLS IN QUESTION WERE FROM HIGHLY ORTHODOX FAMILIES WHO PREFERRED REMAIN SINGLE RATHER THAN ENTER INTO MIXED MARRIAGE. KHANI PROMISED TO REFER CODEL'S PROPOSAL TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES.

7. POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN OFFERED MORE POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY. WHILE NOTING THAT NO SYRIAN REGIME COULD SETTLE FOR ISRAELI CIVILIAN OR MILITARY PRESENCE ON GOLAN, HE CLAIMED THAT DAMASCUS COULD AGREE TO SOME FORM OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEMILITARIZATION OF HEIGHTS. HE POINTED OUT THAT LEBANESE CRISIS HAS CHANGED SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES IN DIRECTION READINESS FOR ACCOMMODATION WITH ISRAEL. AS FOR SECULAR DEMOCRATIC STATE IN PALESTINE, BUSINESSMEN SUGGESTED THIS HAD NOW BECOME PURELY A BARGAINING POINT FOR PALESTINAIANS. FOR PRESIDENT ASAD (WHOM BUSINESSMAN KNOWS PERSONALLY), CONCEPT OF "PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RIGHTS" MEANS "WHATEVER HE CAN GET AT THE MOMENT." SOURCE BELIEVED THAT SYRIA COULD NOT SANCTION OPEN BORDERS AND TRADE WITH ISRAEL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SETTLEMENT, BUT SYRIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY WOULD SUPPORT OPENING, ALTHOUGH IT IN NO POSITION TO PRESSURE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP PRIOR TO SETTLEMENT.

8. DURING LUNCH AT DCM'S RESIDENCE WITH GROUP OF SYRIAN/PALESTINIAN INTELLECTUALS, CODEL HEARD EXPRESSIONS OF MODERATION FROM LATTER AND TOUGH LINE FROM FORMER. SYRIANS INDICATED THAT COEXISTENCE NOT POSSIBLE WITH ISRAELI STATE WHICH MAINTAINED ITS ZIONIST UNDERPINNINGS, ALTHOUGH THEY STRESSED THEY NOT ANTI-JEWISH. SYRIANS FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE OF OPEN BORDERS WITH ISRAEL.

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-07 ISO-00 SS-07 NSC-06 AID-01 /025 W  
-----310927Z 042375 /12

P R 310721Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1137  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
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9. SOVIET AMBASSADOR OUTLINED FOR CODEL SOVIET APPROACH TO PEACE PROCESS, INCLUDING SOVIET AGREEMENT TO GUARANTEE SETTLEMENT IN WHICH PALESTINIAN STATE CREATED AND EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL ACKNOWLEDGED.

10. CODEL MET THREE TIMES WITH MEMBERS OF DAMASCUS JEWISH COMMUNITY, ONCE DURING SATURDAY SERVICES, AGAIN AT SEPARATELY ARRANGED BREAKFAST, AND THIRD TIME IN LOCAL STORE OWNED BY SYRIAN JEW. AT TWO FORMR MEETINGS --WHERE SARG REPS, BOTH FROM MFA AND SECURITY SERVICE PRESENT-- AND AT LATTER SESSION AT LOCAL SORE--WHICH WAS UNARRANGED AND WITHOUT SARG OFFICIALS PRESENT--CODEL WAS TOLD THAT PRIMARY ISSUE FACING COMMUNITY WAS STATUS OF UNMARRIED JEWISH GIRLS. COMMUNITY MEMBERS REVIEWED RECENT POSITIVE CHANGES IN REGULATIONS AFFECTING THEIR INTERNAL TRAVL, ABOLITION OF SARG JEWISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND CESSATION OF STAMP IDENTIFYING RELIGION ON ID CARDS, BUT SAID EMIGRATION STILL NOT PERMITTED. CODEL OFFERED TO ARRANGE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR GIRLS TO STUDY IN U.S. LEADER OF COMMUNITY ASKED HOW THEY COULD GUARANTEE GIRLS WOULD RETURN TO SYRIA AND MFA REP ASSERTED SYRIAN LAW REQUIRED  
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SCHOLARSHIPS BE GRANTED ON GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS WITH NAMES OF RECIPIENTS UNSPECIFIED. (COMMENT: THIS WOULD NOT NECESSARILY APPLY TO PRIVATELY FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS IN OUR OPINION.) CODEL ALSO OFFERED TO HELP ARRANGE VISIT OF LEADING COMMUNITY RABBI TO U.S. LOCAL BUSINESSMAN MENTIONED PARA 7. TOLD CODEL THAT LIFTING OF INTERNAL RESTRICTIONS ON SYRIAN JEWS WAS, IN HIS BELIEF, INTENDED BY ASAD AS

SIGNAL TO ISRAELIS THAT SYRIAN LEADERSHIP WAS REASONABLE.

11. COMMENT:

CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ VISITED SYRIA TO PROBE VIEWS OF BOTH OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL SYRIANS ON ISSUE OF WAR AND PEACE WITH ISRAEL. HIS PROBINGS ELICITED NUMBER OF SPIRITED RESPONSES FROM HIS SUBJECTS, WHICH IN CODEL'S VIEW REPRESENTED HARD-LINE APPROACH TO FUTURE COEXISTENCE WITH ISRAEL. OUR INTERPRETATION OF RESPONSES IS THAT POSSIBILITY OF NORMAL RELATIONS EVOLVING BETWEEN SYRIA AND ISRAEL HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN THOUGHT THROUGH BY MANY OF HIS INTERLOCUTORS. OTHERS, SUCH AS DEPFONMIN, SEEMED TO RELISH OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR ANTAGONISM TOWARDS CODEL WHO IN THEIR VIEW HAD PUBLICLY PROMOTED DISTORTED VIEW OF INTERNAL SYRIAN CONDITIONS IN 1975 HEARINGS. ABSENCE OF ANY LOCAL MEDIA PUBLICITY FOR VISIT SUGGESTS LINGERING OFFICIAL RESENTMENT TOWARDS CODEL ON SARG'S PART, WHILE FACT CODEL PERMITTED RETURN TO DAMASCUS AND MEET WITH VARIETY OF SYRIANS INDICATES RELATIVE SOPHISTICATION OF SARG IN HANDLING ITS FOREIGN CRITICS.

11. WE QUESTION ACCURACY OF DEPFONMIN'S ASSERTION THAT TLASS' VIEWS ON GOLAN DEMILITARIZATION REPRESENT SARG POLICY. ASAD HIMSELF IN NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 1975 SPECIFICALLY ACCEPTED CONCEPT OF DEMILITARIZATION, THOUGH "ONLY IF EQUAL AREAS ARE DEMILITARIZED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LINE." THIS STATEMENT HAS NEVER BEEN RETRACTED OR MODIFIED. TLASS IS NOT POLICY FORMULATOR AND IS KNOWN LOCALLY AS ONE WHO EXPRESSES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WIDELY DIFFERENT OPINIONS ACCORDING TO HIS PASSING MOODS.

12. FOREGOING NOT CLEARED BY CODEL PRIOR DEPARTURE.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 31 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** morefirh  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Reference:** n/a  
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**Review Authority:** morefirh  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 10 NOV 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <10 NOV 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <06 APR 2004 by morefirh>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CODEL SOLARZ  
**TAGS:** OREP, (SOLARZ, SETPHEN)  
**To:** TEL AVIV  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006